Economic Zone for Southern States

*376. MISS MABEL REBELLO :

SHRI B.J. PANDA :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Southern States propose to constitute an Economic Zone on their own on the lines of European Union;

(b) if so, the details of the agenda drawn up for the purpose to boost exports, commerce, tourism and attract FDIs; and

(c) whether such an economic zone has also been constituted by other set of States, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

Improvement of Indian Ports

*377. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state :

(a) whether his Ministry has made any efforts to improve the efficiency and capacity of Indian Ports; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI SHATRUGHAN SINHA) : (a) and (b) Improvement in efficiency and enhancement of capacity in major ports is a continuous process. To increase efficiency and capacity of major ports the following major steps have been taken from time to time in relation to major ports:—

(i) Construction and equipping of new berths/terminals;

(ii) Replacement of existing equipment with the state-of-art equipment on existing berth;

(iii) Labour training and improvement in management practices for achieving higher efficiency output;

(iv) Private sector involvement in the development and operation of port facilities to bring out additional investment and modern techniques for greater efficiency;

(v) Computerisation of port working and partial induction of Electronic Data Interchange; and

(vi) Setting up of Vessel Traffic Management System.

During the Ninth Plan period (1997—2002), additional capacity of 124.40 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) was created in the 12 major ports through upgradation of existing berths, construction of new berths, upgradation and modernization of cargo handling equipment and productivity improvement measures, thus bringing their aggregate capacity as on 31-3-2002 upto 343.95 MTPA. During 2002-03, additional capacity of 18.80 MTPA has been created. As a result, capacity is no longer a constraint in major ports as aggregate capacity is in excess of traffic handled in these ports since 2000-01.

Spread of AIDS

*378. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of people infected with HIV in India has increased by over half-a-million in only one year;

(b) whether it is also a fact that most of this increase is in the areas, considered to have low prevalence, indicating that the epidemic is now moving from easily identifiable groups to the general population; and

(c) if so, the efforts Government propose to make to arrest the spread of this disease?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ) : (a) to (c) National AIDS Control Organisation had estimated the number of HIV infections among the adult population as 3.5 million in 1998, 3.71 million in 1999, 3.86 million in 2000, 3.97 million in 2001, and 4.58 million in the year 2002.

The most recent annual round of HIV sentinel surveillance 2002 indicated mixed trends. The HIV prevalence among attendees at Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) clinic sites demonstrate a slight increase in